

Two Poems

Robert Hedin

THEY WHO LOVED THE SMELL OF BURNING

On the second day they started in
Again, this time on the livestock,
And whatever they saw they killed,
And whatever they killed they left
Where it fell. On the third it rained,
But the morning broke clear, so
They decided to take on the villagers.
First the newborn, then the old ones,
The ones who would remember.
They took them out into the field.
One shot to the back of the head.
On the fourth they woke early,
And by the time the sun was barely
Over the trees, they'd already
Poisoned the wells, the cisterns.
But mostly they burned. They loved
The smell of burning. They burned
The crops, the vineyards, then torched

The forests. They burned all day
And into the next. They burned
Until there was no shade,
Nothing but smoking charcoal
And dead trees. Then they erased
The maps and renamed the villages.
This one Cinder, this one Ash.

OFF NEWFOUNDLAND

We were two days out in the cold waters
Off Newfoundland, hauling in the last
Of our lobster pots, when we heard high up
The unmistakable beating of engines.
And there, nosing down out of the clouds,
Was the *Hindenburg*, pride of the Nazis.
And we all stood back, marveling at how
Beautiful it was, how buoyant, shining
Like some bright summons in the evening sky.
Then it dipped its great prow in salute,
And sailed on, and left us there with big swells,
Lightning, black clouds massed at the horizon.

Robert Hedin's most recent books include *At the Great Door of Morning: Selected Poems and Translations* (Copper Canyon Press) and, as co-editor, *The Uncommon Speech of Paradise: Poems on the Art of Poetry* (White Pine Press). He lives in Frontenac, Minnesota.